



# Literacy Links

June, 2005  
Volume 1, Number 4

## Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

*"It has been our experience that students become interested and enthusiastic about words when instruction is rich and lively."*

Isabel Beck, Margaret McKeown, and Linda Kucan, 2002



### Upcoming Maine Reading First Events

June 23 and 24~  
Maine Reading First  
Level II Summer  
Institute at the  
Sunday River Resort

*This is the second newsletter which is being devoted to one of the five essential elements of reading instruction. The May edition of Literacy Links provided an in-depth look at reading fluency. If you did not receive a copy of the May edition, it can be accessed at*

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

*This month's edition of Literacy Links will focus on vocabulary.*

### Spotlight on... Vocabulary

There are four types of vocabulary: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These four vocabulary types can be divided into two primary categories:

- *Receptive vocabulary* refers to the words which are recognized and understood through listening and reading.
- *Expressive vocabulary* refers to the words which are used to communicate ideas through speaking and writing.

The overall size of each of the four vocabulary types increases as children develop into adults. The size of each vocabulary type in relation to the other types also changes over time. Young children have a large listening vocabulary and a small reading vocabulary. Adults, on the other hand, have a large reading vocabulary.

Students learn many vocabulary words indirectly through engagement in conversations, listening to someone read to them, or reading extensively on their own. However, direct instruction is also a critical component of vocabulary instruction. Direct instruction in vocabulary includes instruction on the meanings of specific words as well as instruction on the strategies needed for students to become independent word learners.

Rich vocabulary instruction is characterized by student's active engagement with new words both within and beyond the classroom. Students need multiple and repeated exposures to new words in order to increase the depth of their word knowledge. The level at which a student knows a word progresses from unknown to acquainted to established. A student who has established knowledge of a word is able to demonstrate the understanding and ability to use the word within different contexts and across many situations. (Please see "Description of Instructional Idea: Tier Two Words" for additional details about direct vocabulary instruction.)

### Summary of Professional Literacy Text... Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction

Two of the leading researchers in the area of vocabulary, Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown, collaborated with a colleague, Linda Kucan, to author *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. The content of this

June 27 and 28~  
Maine Reading First  
Level I Summer  
Institute at the  
University of Maine  
at Presque Isle

June 30 and July 1~  
Maine Reading First  
Level I Summer  
Institute at the  
Samoset Resort

July 15~Maine  
Reading First  
Seminar for School  
Leaders at the  
Augusta Civic Center



*"Teachers can make  
vocabulary meaningful  
and memorable for  
students by anchoring  
new words in multiple  
contexts."*

Connie Juel and  
Rebecca Deffes, 2004

book is based on the discoveries made from several research studies conducted by Ms. Beck and Ms. McKeown. The authors begin the book by sharing the definition, characteristics, and theory behind 'robust' vocabulary instruction. They suggest that vocabulary instruction should provide students with rich information about new words, and experiences with new words should occur multiple times across different situations. Ideas for meaningful learning activities for both younger and older students are shared in separate chapters of the book. *Bringing Words to Life* also shares information and a list of books the authors have identified for use in Text Talk, a research project aimed to enhance vocabulary and comprehension development through expanding read alouds. More information about *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* can be obtained at <http://www.guilford.com>

## Description of Instructional Idea...

### Tier Two Words

The number of vocabulary words which students need to learn is immense and it is impossible to teach all of these words directly. It is critical to recognize that not all words need the same attention. Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown have proposed the idea that vocabulary is comprised of three tiers.

- **Tier 1:** Basic words that are learned without direct attention or instruction. Examples of Tier 1 words are *clock, baby, happy,* and *walk*.
- **Tier 2:** Words that are frequently and commonly used across many contexts or domains. Examples of Tier 2 words are *fortunate, absurd, coincidence,* and *industrious*.
- **Tier 3:** Words that are not frequently used except in specific contexts or domains. Examples of Tier 3 words are *isotope, peninsula, lathe,* and *refinery*.

The tier which should receive the greatest focus for direct instruction is Tier 2. Some questions to consider when selecting Tier 2 words for instruction include:

- How important and useful is the word?
- What is the instructional potential of the word?
- What role does the word play in communicating the meaning of the context in which it is used?

To begin selecting Tier 2 words for instruction from a text, list all of the words that are likely to be unfamiliar to students. Analyze the list of words and identify which words can be categorized as Tier 2 words. Further analyze the list by indicating which of these Tier 2 words are most necessary for comprehension of the text. Also consider which of these Tier 2 words students already have ways with which to express the concepts associated with the words. The final determination is which words will receive brief attention and which words will require more elaborate attention.

## News from Maine Reading First...

**REGISTER NOW** for one of the four Maine Reading First summer institutes. Spaces are still available for the following events:

1. Maine Reading First Level I Summer Institutes at either the University of Maine at Presque Isle or the Samoset Resort
2. Maine Reading First Level II Summer Institute at the Sunday River Resort
3. Maine Reading First Seminar for School Leaders at the Augusta

Civic Center

Descriptions and registration forms for all of these events can be accessed at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email [janet.trembly@maine.gov](mailto:janet.trembly@maine.gov)

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>